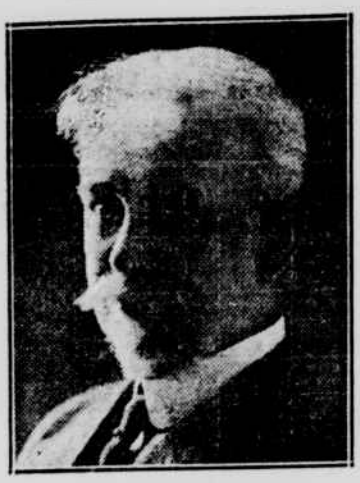
The Vocal Student's Mental Attitude.



LOUIS ARTHUR RUSSELL.

By LOUIS ARTHUR RUSSELL.

Intelligent study among music students is the exception. Real determination and great courage are also exceptional, and to these deficiencies may be attributed many of the failures of students to realize their desire to become artists. Determined courage and intelligent application are the great factors of success in the student's life. A strong personality will win the victory where direct talent will fail. A self-reliant student, who, finding a truth, will apply it and work out its usefulness to himself by careful practice, will win his desires long before his more favored fellow-student whose talents are considered sufficient to carry him through.

A truly talented student may very soon accomplish everything the book requires, and this without apparent effort, but once this is done his real work begins, for he must now develop his original genius, within sane limits, else it will run riot with him and mar all the products of his inspiration by unbridled strokes of creative or executive force.

Mozart stands alone in music as a man who, possessed of the spirit of inspiration, was, almost without effort, also possessed of an intuitive comprehension of the "school," and his genius was not in any sense wild, but was filled with the finest sense of form and finish, so that the products of his inspiration were, from his earlier days of productiveness, marked by the polish of the schools, as well as by the fire of native genius.

Schubert was a genius whose inspiration can be considered not less positive than that of Mozart. In fact, it may almost be said that Schubert was, in spirit, distinctly in advance of Mozart; yet this great composer's works will never reach the heart of the world as their inspiration warrants, for the nicety of polish, the perfection of form, the evidences of genius balanced with full comprehension of compactness and clarity of form (as seen in Mozart's works) are often lacking, and many works of undisputed inspiration are forbidden place in popular esteem because of evident marks of imperfect balance.

When Paganini found himself possessed of all that the schools knew of violin playing he withdrew from the outside world and, not content with what had gone before him, which he had conquered, he entered into private communion, as it were, with his genius, and evolved from the depths of his spirit and his learning those wonderful original devices of technic which won for him the name of "demon of the fiddle." Liszt did the same thing, and many others who have reached artistic distinction won the crown of success by building upon a foundation of classic schooling a superstructure of higher knowledge, evolved from the spirit of the individual self, through severe labor.

What, then, are we to conclude other than that genius is "the capacity for unlimited intelligent work"? We find that the fire of inspiration may also be the fire of truth. But to bring it to the human heart as a message of beauty and delight it must be put in thorough control, so that its expression may be fully intelligible to the masses. If this be true of creative force it is no less true of executive talent, the character of which is perceptive and reflex as well as positive or original, requiring, first of all, thorough technical culture, then a development of the higher faculties of the spirit and mind.

After all is told of the schools, there is so much beyond that the real study of acknowledged laws is but a small part of a singer's or player's education. All that is known of law alone can readily be learned by the diligent student. The real work begins after a fair amount of technical knowledge is acquired, and it is upon this point that I wish particularly to lay stress.

Students should early in their work develop thoughtful concentration. With the teacher's admonitions well stored in mind, the student should go to his practice room and work out the problems by the deepest thought. The mere doing of a set of vocalizes, in time and tune; the mere singing of a sustained tone, a scale or any other vocal exercise, counts for little or nothing in itself. The question should always be: "How have I done it?" following "What have I done?" Couple with the old Rossinian maxim that the three necessary things for a successful singer are "voice, voice and voice," a further truth, and add three more—"thought, thought and thought." The thinking pupil is the progressive pupil. The pupil who expects the teacher to do all the thinking is the one who frequently comes to a dead halt in his progress, and wonders why he does not overcome the bad habits he finds he has contracted.

Unity Among Teacher, Child and Parents.

ALFRED E. FRECKELTON, JR.

By ALFRED EDWARD FRECKELTON, JR.

"I called to inquire your opinion of Mary's work. I have been planning to see you for some weeks, but could not seem to find the time in which to call. Mr. S— and myself are not quite satisfied that she is studying properly, but as neither of us has any knowledge at all of music or piano playing we decided to ask your opinion. She says that she studies and practises all that you tell her to do, but we have no means of knowing whether she does or not."

This portion of a conversation with the mother of one of my pupils opened my eyes, as it were, to an existing condition in the very important, but much neglected, relationship between the teacher, the child and the parent—the three supposedly working with one end in view.

The teacher sees the child not more than twice weekly, and in the majority of cases only once, and endeavors to impart a knowledge of music and what and how to study and practise.

The child, in the majority of instances, makes an effort to follow such directions as may be remembered (much has been forgotten before leaving the studio), but in some cases deliberately shirks the "hard" parts.

The parent, anxious to have the child progress as rapidly as possible, in some cases is able to give genuine assistance; in other cases is ignorant of how to help. Some parents show no interest whatever, feeling that all that is necessary is to pay for instruction and the teacher will attend to the rest; and in a very few cases, I regret to say, apparently place obstacles in the path of progress, such as permitting guests to interfere with the child's study, etc.

Interviews with parents revealed that a means of uniting the three factors to a better understanding of each other and the aim in view, would be more than appreciated.

First was tried a pupil's lesson book, in which was entered all material to be studied and practised before the following lesson, with directions, if necessary, for both the pupil and the parent. A complete record of all metronomic gain in speed in all technical exercises was also entered.

This book proved to be more satisfactory than a weekly lesson card inasmuch as there was less possibility of loss, and it also furnished more space for the noting of corrections to be made, and for general remarks.

A glance at these books reveals the progress made by the pupil since the very beginning and also provides the pupil with a reminder and the parent with a record of what has been and is to be accomplished. After fourteen years of experience with them I find that, in a modified form, they are of great value to advanced students, principally as a means of record.

As a logical result of this lesson book there came the written report sent to the parents or the guardian at stated intervals. In this report is reviewed the work done by the pupil, hints as to the parents' supervision and notes as to errors that have been uncorrected.

Supplementary to this the telephone is of great value; also visits by either or both of the parents to the studio, at which time late selections assigned to the child for study are played and explained. This has proved to be of especially great value to parents untrained in music.

Last, but not least, we have the practice record card. Of all the forms procurable the one devised by Edward Morris Bowman has proved to be the most satisfactory.

Spaces are furnished on this record for entering the time assigned for the study or practice of each subject and the total; spaces for the amount devoted to each subject daily and the total for each day, the week and a weekly total for each subject. One of these cards is given to the pupil each week and proves a great aid and incentive to efficient and systematic study by the pupil and to its supervision by the parent.

Experience has proved that this drawing closer of the bonds is a great help to the three concerned—the teacher, the child and the parent.

With Boston's Vocal Teachers and Students

By FREDERICK W. WODELL.

The establishment of the Boston Opera Company's season a few years ago served to emphasize the craze among vocal pupils in the city to "study for grand opera." Since the abandonment of the enterprise the craze has subsided to a degree, but there are still too many among vocal pupils in the city yearning for a "place in the sun" of grand opera. In the nature of the case, not many are "called" to this work, and still fewer can, in this country, have the opportunity to enter upon such a career. Mme. Culp made a deep and valuable impression upon Boston's voice students by her demonstration that the song recital offers an opportunity for the exhibition of a higher type of vocal and interpretative art than does grand opera. There is room for encouragement among those who value true vocal art because of the widespread appreciation among us of the singing of such brilliant exponents of that art as Mme. Sembrich and Mme. Culp.

Recently a movement has been started in connection with the teaching of vocal music in the public schools of Boston looking toward the development of the musical nature and taste of the child by giving him music of a better quality to sing, and paying more attention to the use of good tone quality and to "self-expression" through music, than to the acquisition of the ability to read by note, though that subject is not neglected. The change is one welcomed by vocal teachers, who appreciate how much of good or ill can come to the voices of the young through public school singing.

Another forward step in connection with the teaching of singing in Boston was taken when the Boston Vocal Teachers' Association was formed. Frank E. Morse is now president and Clarence E. Hay secretary. The ex-presidents are Stephen Townsend, Charles A. White and Frederick W. Wodell. The membership comprises about thirty men who are looked upon as leaders in the profession in the city. The printed constitution says, "Its object shall be the furtherance of the interests of teachers of singing." Presumably it is understood that the interests of the public will be advanced whenever the interests of the teachers of singing are furthered. If the organization can do anything to

FREDERICK W. WODELL.

decrease the amount of "fake" teaching of singing in Boston, it will be of assistance to the public. No woman can become a member of the organization, but undoubtedly women soon will organize a similar club of their own, for some of the most successful and brilliant vocal teachers in the city are women.

A few years ago it appeared that interest in choral music in Boston was waning. Of late, however, the Cecilia Society has taken a new lease of life under the presidency of Henry L. Mason, of Mason & Hamlin, and the Loyola Choral Society, made up of members of the Roman Catholic church choirs, has made a successful first appearance with a performance of Gounod's "Redemption" in Symphony Hall. The Boston Choral Music Society, a small chorus of selected voices, has recently made a good record with presentations of unusual and little known works by ancient and modern writers. The Choral Union also has been presenting modern works and some by American composers. There is yet room in the choral field in Boston. Among the native born population of New England there is apparently a reluctance to join in choral singing. "A soloist or nothing" may be said to be the motto of too many young persons here who have taken a few vocal lessons. The community chorus idea, which is slowly taking hold in this section, may be helpful in this connection.

Long Life for Our Modern Dances.

By AD. NEWBERGER.

Never since modern dancing has taken a hold on the popular mind has there been such a diversity of new and altogether irresistible dance movements. Exponents of dance all over the country have taken upon themselves the task of creating new steps, with results which make dancing this winter a lasting delight.

ADOLPH NEWBERGER.
Photo by White.

Several new dances which are destined to become the rage on the ballroom floor were adopted at the recent convention of the American Society of Professors of Dancing. With the popular trend toward everything military, they adopted my "Military Tactics," the name of which implies its character. It is danced to spirited martial music, punctuated by bugle calls. Another of my dances was inspired by the growing popularity of Hawaiian music, and is called the "Hawaiian One-Step." By combining effective and simple steps to the quaint and plaintive strain of the ukaleli this dance has been evolved.

I predict longevity for the modern dances.